



234 N. Central Avenue
Suite 6400
Phoenix, AZ 85004-2187
Phone: 602-506-2930
Fax: 602-506-4692
www.maricopa.gov/parks

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 25, 2007

To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners

From: William C. Scalzo, Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "WCS", is written over the "From:" line.

Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the April Director's Summary.

Director Report

Media coverage was great over the past 30 days especially the story on growth threatening our parks in the April 28, 2007 Republic. Also during the past thirty days we have conducted three great facility dedications at White Tank and Estrella Mountain Regional Parks, as well as at Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area. The next events will center on ground breakings for the new visitor centers. Included with this is a copy of our ten year CIP.

Assistant Director Report

Board of Supervisors Presentation: On April 16, 2007 staff presented a proposed 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan to the Board of Supervisors. The presentation also included updates on current capital projects, the Parks System Strategic Master Plan, the Scorpion Bay Marina project and the resource damage occurring in the Agua Fria Area of Lake Pleasant.

The Supervisors spent considerable time discussing the parks capital needs and provided an overall consensus that the projects presented were warranted. A discussion followed about the limited availability of capital funds for the next fiscal year and direction was given to evaluate the potential of developing a bond initiative for parks.

Commissioner Lynch was in attendance at the meeting.

Park System Master Plan: The first round of public meetings has been completed with the final meeting held on April 7 in Anthem. Ten public input forums were held throughout the county from areas as far as Queen Creek to Gila Bend. Common issues appear to be related to rapid growth of the County and a perceived loss of open space threatening the quality of life for residents. The consultants are currently wrapping-up a countywide mapping process and have begun an assessment of park programming. A park operational analysis will soon be underway. The community values model will now begin to take form with input from the public forums, visitor and general population surveys and the qualitative data received from the focus group meetings held earlier this spring. The process is still on-track to be completed in draft by late fall.

Superintendent Report

Desert Outdoor Center: Process Review: The DOC has had an extraordinary number of cancellations this year, entailing about 18 groups and total lost revenue of about \$35K. The initial read is that the teachers have had bus issues mainly...perhaps related to fuel prices. However, staff is in the process of gathering some information from the teachers to learn more about the causes of these cancellations. Each teacher who initially made the reservation will be phoned and asked a series

of questions. These questions will involve all aspects of our business practice from taking reservations to presenting classes. The intent is to get feedback on how well we perform our job.

Aquatics Camp: Coordination with the Boy Scouts is increasing as time approaches for this summer day camp to begin. It will run for 5 weeks in June and July. The BSA capital campaign consultant has determined that the market will support about \$6 million in potential fundraising, which will fund boats (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, and sail boats) for "Lake Pleasant Camp," but not the proposed boathouse. A SLIF grant to cover the boathouse will be prepared by DOC staff this year.

Children and Nature Network: In response to the popular book by Richard Louv entitled "Last Child in the Woods," the Children and Nature Network, a non-profit organization helping build the movement to reconnect children and nature, was formed. Forming an Arizona chapter of this organization was the subject of a gathering at the Phoenix Zoo. The ultimate goals include creating a clearing house for "best practices" in experiential learning about nature...providing answers to the question, "How do I teach in the 'experiential mode'?"

About 30 folks were present at the Monday morning meeting...reps from APRA, Game and Fish, Audubon, Liberty Wildlife, Phoenix and State parks, plus several private educational consultant types. Jeff Williamson, Phoenix Zoo Executive Director, said that many other groups expressed an interest in forming a state network, but couldn't attend the meeting.

Rich Glinski will continue to attend these organizational meetings, and at the same time steer the group into producing some specific curriculum that tells how to teach kids about the desert in an experiential way.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: *Pack It In-Pack It Out Program:* 2500 vehicle receipts were used at the entry station on Easter Sunday and contained a message requesting visitors to take their trash out with them.

Natural Resources Program: Apache Bass conducted a clean-up in Dirty Shirt on February 24th. Canyon Bass is scheduled for April 28th. This month will mark the third month the Arizona Bass Federation has participated in the program. Different clubs are scheduled for monthly clean-ups through December.

Dam Good Run, Walk, Hike – 60 registered participants generated \$1,357.50 in donations and \$170 in vehicle entry fees. Adobe Mountain Wildlife and Liberty Wildlife were hits, as were the popsicles donated by Shamrock Farms. CAP and BLM sponsored booths. CAP also donated seven cases of water. Target distributed water bottles. Other sponsors donated fruit, cookies, and discount coupons. Raffle prizes included gift baskets from Curves and Runner's Den, \$25 gift cards from Basha's, Walmart (2), Target (2), and \$50 from Ride Now PowerSports. Survey results showed an overwhelming number of participants chose the longer, 7-mile course and that most participants were new to the event. The oldest participant was 87 years, and one 81 year-old celebrated a birthday; both chose the 7-mile course.

West Valley Recreation Passport Program: Remaining events for the program include the Boating Safety Celebration in May and the Fireworks Celebration in July. This fulfills the goal of spotlighting at least one LP program or event per month as a passport event. Events and programs for the second half of the year will be added when they are available. Lake Pleasant purchased a unique stamp (lizard) that the main contact station will use to mark the card of each guest who arrives at the park to attend a passport program or event.

Education Programs: Lake Pleasant started the month off with a very successful Bald Eagle presentation at the visitor center. Rich Glinski and Dave Janssen, one of our nest watchers, presented to a packed house about the eagle program and gave information about our new little male eaglet.

Betty and Rusty Hastings, of Betty's Trail Rides, gave their "Finding Gold!" presentation to a family crowd of various ages on the patio of the visitor center twice this month.

The "Live! Reptiles of Arizona" program was a big hit this month, coinciding with the warmer weather and the much needed education about these critters. Both campers and day visitors enjoyed seeing and learning about the animals.

With the days and evenings being so nice, the "Pleasant Paddlers Program" has seen a boost in participants. The Humbug Bay Tour & Hike included a short hike to the historic Humbug Gold Hydraulic Mining Complex Dam. Ranger

Terry presented a history talk about the area during the lunch at the site. The biggest participant draw was for the full moon paddle in the Castle Creek area, the moon was bright and the water calm.

The "Lake Pleasant History" slide show program filled the visitor center; this goes to show, the new amphitheater will be very welcomed. A "Kids & Dads Fishing" Program was a success with a good number of families participating from the Pipeline Canyon floating bridge. The "Sunday Morning Fitness Hikes" have some returning people now. The message is out; it can be scenic and fun to get fit!

Still the most treasured hike at Lake Pleasant, according to the visitors, is the ranger lead exploring hike through Morgan City Wash. With lush habitat and year round running water, it is a jewel of the park.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park: *Entry Station Dedication:* The White Tank Entry Station was dedicated on April 10th with the Commission present.

Programs: The White Tank Park Interpretive program is going strong. Out reach programs remain strong. One recent outreach to Verrado educated 300 students and faculty. Bill Talboys and Genai Newberg took the snakes and Gila Monster which were the stars of the show.

Construction: The New Restroom at Area #7 is nearly complete.

Issue: CASE heavy equipment company is moving out. The company leased the state land south of White Tank. The company is to remediate the land before departure. A 10 foot tall dirt berm has served for the southern boundary of White Tank for the past 50 years. That berm is now leveled out, leaving the park with No Southern Fence.

Operations: 1.5 acres of Park land burned a little over a year ago near the Competitive Track. Desert seeds are being planted now so seed coats will break down before the fall rains.

Trails: Mile Markers placed on trail sides have been a benefit to hikers and staff at White Tank. Some modifications to the system will be made as we learn what works best for the public and before we put systems in place in other county parks.

APRA Open Space Conference: Park Supervisor Don Harris is the Chairman of the APRA Open Space Planning Committee this year. The Conference will be held at ASU West on May 9th.

Buckeye Hills Regional Park: D.L. Withers has set up construction trailers. We had our first construction meeting April 19th and grading has started on site. May 2nd the Board of Supervisors will approve the structural plans for the buildings.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: *Easter:* April 8 was a busy day on the park with well over 6,000 visitors picnicking on the turf area to celebrate Easter. Park staff and volunteers did an excellent job cleaning up afterwards. The following weekend it was back to business as usual with ramada rentals and baseball games occupying the staff's time.

PIR: The park's Competitive Track was temporarily closed for the NASCAR Event at Phoenix International Raceway. Traffic for the event was managed very well by the Sheriff's Office and park patrons were able to continue with most recreational activities during this time.

Entry Station/Irrigation Dedication: The park held its Grand Opening Celebration for its new Contact Station and Irrigation System Improvements on April 23. County Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox was in attendance, spoke words of encouragement for future park improvements and sold an entry ticket to the first customer that came through the Contact Station after the ceremonial ribbon cutting. Refreshments for the attendees were provided by JZ Engineering and Grounds Control.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: April has proven to be a strong month following a substantial March for Usery Park. March and April spring season reservations, camping and attendance are up significantly. The Easter weekend was busy, but uneventful with many hikers and picnickers enjoying the holiday. The park benefited from 21 groups making reservations for their Easter picnics.

Usery offered 20 public programs in April with the new Interpretive Ranger, Jenny Work and park hosts. The Full Moon Hike and the Toddler Cruise were the most attended. New programming with different types of benefits for park visitors were; "What's in Your First Aid Kit?" & "Kids Learn to Hike". The new ranger has been participating in curriculum training at the Desert Outdoor Center to become more acquainted with Sonoran Desert habitats.

There were three archery events in April: The Arizona Police Games (6 shooters), The Grand Canyon State Games (70 shooters) and The Arizona State Field Archery Championships NFAA (approximate 50 shooters).

The Park Maintenance Worker position has been filled; Steven Spence started work on April 23rd. He comes to the department with a good deal experience in maintenance and volunteer trail work. Steve has also been an avid Usery park visitor for a number of years.

Several varieties of aquatic plants have been added to the pond at the wildlife viewing area. The Park Supervisor and the Ranger met with Arizona Game & Fish staff to discuss the type of fish that will reside in the pond and the appropriate placement of the viewing blinds and interpretation material.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: New construction is underway to replace the second restroom in the North Loop of the Family Campground and add a restroom to the Competitive Track parking lot. Both are expected to be complete in late April to early May.

In March, the park hosted the first annual Joanne Wood Walk for Breast Cancer research and awareness. The park provided assistance in setting up aid stations and getting all the volunteers into position. The turnout was less than expected, 62 walkers but they were a determined bunch and raised over \$19,000 for Breast Cancer Research and Awareness. The promoters seemed very happy and will be back for the 2nd Annual walk on March 22, 2008.

The last week of the month, the park hosted the first race in the National Mountain Bike Series that determines the U.S. National Champion. This year the park worked closely with the Town of Fountain Hills and the Chamber of Commerce paid to have posters and event schedules printed & distributed at the park and in the businesses in town as well as bikes shops around the valley. In the three days of racing over 700 racers started at the park and in Fountain Hills during the Saturday night events. The quality of the racers present has never been higher. As an example, in the Women's Pro Cross Country race on Sunday afternoon; on the starting line the defending National All Around Champion, the defending National Cross Country Champion, the Canadian Champion, the current #1 women's racer in the world and 2004 Olympic team member. The same was true of the men pros and this event has scheduled to be back in 2008, on April 4-6th.

On March 13th, the Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce contacted Jeremy Hall, President of MCO Properties in Fountain Hills, President Rafael Bear, of the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation and Rand Hubbell, Park Supervisor to become ex-officio members of the Chambers Board of Director's.

In the spring of 2005, we had 27 days when our campground was full, in 2006 we had 40 days, and this spring we had 48 days when our campground was full, in addition we had campers dry camping in our overflow area.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area: Ranger Kevin Smith coordinated & supervised a conservation project with the Sierra Club to plant containerized ironwood trees in a disturbed area in our floodplain. The Sierra Club paid for the 25 trees with chapter funds, totaling \$ 130. Approximately 48 volunteer hours were donated in this effort.

He also coordinated & supervised a conservation project (bufflegrass removal) with an Eagle Scout candidate. This project had 20 scouts & 8 adults; they completed a tremendous amount of work & donated \$300 in hand tools. Approximately 125 volunteer hours were donated in this effort.

John Gunn made a presentation to the national meeting of the Organization of Wildlife Land Specialists in Scottsdale. John Gunn & Dr. Ed Northam of University of Arizona Agricultural Extension Service met & formally evaluated herbicide treatment plots.

Staff coordinated a meeting with the Rebecca Torres of the NRCS of the USDA to showcase the parks many opportunities and challenges and to initiate discussions on possible joint grant opportunities.

Park staff and docents provided 19 guided hikes this month, with our docents donating 23 hours.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: "Queens of Hearts Poker Trail Ride" was a very successful special engagement for the park. 65 equestrian riders joined in the event festivities and rode along the Goldmine Trail and played poker along the way.

"Scrambled EGG-Stravaganza" attracted 43 visitors, as they hiked along a portion of the Goldmine Trail gathering clues and learning about various plants and wildlife. Once they completed the worksheet, the participants visited the Visitor Center to whisper the secret password to receive a special egg treat.

The Town of Queen Creek Seniors Hike attracted 18 visitors for a special hike along the Goldmine Trail. We discussed the history of the park and pointed out interesting facts about the wildlife and plant-life at San Tan. The "Fitness Hike" along Goldmine and Moonlight trails brought in 5 visitors. The hike was geared for pleasure and exercise.

"Earth Day Nature Walk" was led by visiting Interpretive Ranger, Kevin Smith, from Spur Cross. We hiked along the San Tan and Moonlight Trails discussing the plant-life found in the Sonora Desert as well as the significance/history of Earth Day.

The trails dedication ceremony scheduled for April 24th has been postponed for a later date. The trails crew and park staff are working on opening the washes/pre-existing trails. The trails crew plans to add a portion of path to the Goldmine Trail, which will connect to the Wagon Wheel entrance area.

The Tortoise exhibit is undergoing some finishing touches to prepare for the desert tortoises. We are currently working with the Arizona Game & Fish/Adobe Mountain Wildlife to adopt two female tortoises for the exhibit.

The Maintenance Worker completed the removal of barbs on the barbed wire fence inside the equestrian staging area to provide a safer environment for the horses and riders.

Cave Creek Mountain Regional Park: Bob Gaulden's Memorial Service was held on April 12th with over 75 friends and co-workers in attendance. A memorial bench was dedicated in Bob's memory just above the ramada area on the Overton Trail. In addition, a shadow box that was constructed by a Park Host will be on display with Bob's fire making tools in the Park Office until the new Visitor's Center is constructed.

Mark Lansing's officially ended his employment with the Maricopa County on Friday, April 20 with a retirement party that was well attended by Department employees.

Ray Kaniut officially took over the reins from Mark Lansing and is the new Cave Creek Park Supervisor.

An Earth Day Clean-up in partnership with the City of Phoenix was held at Adobe Dam Recreation Area. Due to the cold & wet weather, the turnout was a little lower than expected but the 50 volunteers from the City of Phoenix Wake-Up Club, Target Financial, Old Navy and the community left the park very clean! News Channel 3 attended the event and our own Pete Hannigan made the 6:00 news!

The Cave Creek campground continued to be very busy with 36 of the 38 available camping spots occupied. Three (3) campground hosts are still working on the weekends.

Contract Updates

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: The decision on the "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) was reached by BOR; hence the permitting has begun. Critical permits are the MAG 208, needed for the waste treatment plant an interim permit will be the authorization to "vault and haul" (which has been applied for) and the 404 Permit from Corps of Engineers to begin all site preparation (which has been drafted and will be sent to their legal counsel for review). Permits have been received from the Department of Agriculture to remove cacti and from the Central Arizona Project to purchase water for dust control during construction.

An amended agreement with the Central Arizona Water Conservation District was approved by the Board of Supervisors on March 21, 2007. The amended subcontract provides for permanent service of Colorado River water with an initial delivery term of 100 years. All costs associated with M&I water service will be reimbursed by contract concessionaires. There is no additional financial impact to the Department.

Adobe Dam Regional Park: The Board of Supervisors on April 18, 2007 approved the Use Management Agreement between County and Adobe Dam Paintball Park – a “for-profit” concessionaire.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) pertaining to the Aquatic Park (e.g. Waterworld Safari) was released on March 29, 2007. The Pre-Proposal Conference was held April 24, 2007 with Proposals due November 29, 2007.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: The Use Management Agreement continues to be negotiated between County and Verizon for a cell tower site at Usery Mountain Regional Park.

Amendment One to the Agreement with Arizona Model Aviators is being negotiated. Terms of the amended agreement, if accepted by the Concessionaire and County, would provide additional revenue for Parks and “formalize” issues of concern on the part of Maricopa County Flood Control District in regards to access road maintenance and safety issues in event of flooding.

Grant Updates

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area: A Cooperative Agreement with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was approved by the Board of Supervisors in the amount of \$9,200. The project includes constructing a solar powered native fish refuge pond for the purpose of creating, protecting, restoring, and enhancing wildlife habitats that benefit Federal trust species, which include federally listed threatened and endangered species, waterfowl, shorebirds, and migratory birds. Spur Cross will contribute an existing well, the labor, use of equipment, security fencing for site and maintain and manage the ponds. Total project is estimated at \$17,550.

Administration: An application has been submitted to the Arizona Office of Tourism for the Teamwork for Effective Arizona Marketing (TEAM) grant for 50% matching funds of \$9,452.14. Project will include brochure printing and distribution to visitor-oriented locations as well as employee designated areas within major corporations, Canadian Traveler display ad and Phoenix Official Visitors guide display ad.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

We are currently recruiting for the following positions: Trades Specialist – Electrician (Construction) and Accountant/Procurement Specialist (Headquarters). Interviews were held on April 26 for Park Maintenance Worker at the Desert Outdoor Center. Interviews are currently being scheduled for Interpretive Ranger at McDowell and Interpretive Ranger at Cave Creek.